

# ARE YOU READY TO WIN?

## Advocacy Basics

**What is our Message?**

**What is the Solution?**

**What Action Do You Want the Elected Official To Take?**

**What is your “Battle” Plan ?**

### Developing the “Battle” Plan & Creating Momentum for YOUR Issue!

1. Develop Your Leadership Team
2. Craft Your Message and Stick to the Script
3. State Your Solution
4. Define YOUR ASK!
5. Who Can Open the Door to Elected Official?
6. Identify Your Partners! Local Allies!
7. Grassroots Organizing: Community Briefing; Town Hall Meetings, Agency Open Houses
8. Inviting Elected Officials to YOUR facility
9. Free Media Outreach
10. Editorial Boards
11. Press Releases
12. TV & Radio Talk Shows
13. PSAs (College; PR Firm; Business)
14. Planning your visits to elected officials
15. Partnering with groups like Children’s Campaign’s Candidate Connection
16. Preparing Testimony
17. Including Parents/Youth/Clients in Hearings
18. Taking a Public Stand Example: Rally on Tally! Girls March At the Capitol
19. Letter writing campaigns
20. Phone Calls and Faxes
21. You Must Be Present to Win!

## ADVOCACY TIPS

### The ABC's

**A**ccurate. Make certain that the information you are providing is direct and accurate. Never lie or provide inaccurate information. If you don't know something, be honest about it. You can always locate the correct information after the meeting and use that as an excuse to follow up in the future.

**B**rief. In most cases, you will have a limited amount of time to make your pitch. Keep it short, and keep it simple! Think carefully about two or three main talking points they hope to communicate – and stick to these points throughout your advocacy.

**C**ourteous. Whether you agree or disagree with your legislator it is important that you maintain some level of respect. Your goal as an advocate is to create a safe space for your legislator so that tough choices can be made with confidence. It is important that you go out of your way to be a positive resource for your legislator. Be punctual and patient. Don't lie or exaggerate. Don't argue or raise your voice. Don't be rude or obnoxious.

**Do** Follow-Up. Be proactive and responsive. Follow up your meeting with a thank-you letter that outlines the various topics covered during the meeting, reiterates any commitments your legislator made, and includes any additional information or materials requested during the meeting. Also, you should use this opportunity to accurately communicate any information you didn't readily have available or didn't know during the course of your meeting.

### Tactical Tips for Advocates

When communicating with elected officials, do not feel that your responsibility to be a "know-it-all". A few short position statements about why you support or oppose a specific piece of legislation (or proposal) will suffice. Always give your name, address, and telephone number so that they know you are one of their constituents. Be sure to include this information whether you visit in person, call, or write.

Most importantly, be **accurate**, **brief** and **courteous** when communicating with your legislators. Remember, legislators are people, too!

- **Timing** is very important. If the issue you are concerned about is imminent, contacting your legislator quickly by phone or e-mail can be very effective. However, if you have time, take advantage of other influential tactics, such as writing a letter, attending a city or county council meeting, placing a phone call to your elected official's office or meeting directly with your elected leaders. The key is to use timing to your advantage with each tactic you use.
- **Develop a Relationship.** Relationships are necessary in order to influence change. Advocacy is the development and maintenance of an on-going conversation to promote your position. An advocate's job is to develop a working

relationship with your elected officials and the staffers who are assigned to work on your issue. When it comes time for action, knowing someone to call will pay off. The key is to develop a network that can make your position heard.

- **Voice Your Position and Ask for Action!** Elected officials frequently act on behalf of their constituency. Even if your elected official does not currently support your position it can be extremely helpful to contact them on a regular basis. Make your concerns vocal, and always ask for your legislator for an action.
- **Know the Issue.** Elected officials have several issues they are concerned with at any given time. Make certain that you are relaying concise and accurate information. Prepare and distribute information based on sound, research. Ask questions about your elected official's feelings toward a particular issue, and be ready for your legislator to ask you questions about your position.
- **Listen & Share Information.** It is very important to listen. Really understand what their positions are and why. Relay any information you receive from your elected officials to the members of your organization, community, family and friends. Information helps to shape future talking points and also helps to broaden the audience.

### The Do's and Don'ts

The Dos	The DON'Ts
Relay accurate information	Lie or exaggerate
Make your arguments brief	Waste time
Be courteous, punctual and patient	Be a know-it-all
Make yourself a resource	Make promises you can't deliver
Choose 2 or 3 main talking points, and stick to 'em!	Be argumentative
Ask for a specific action	Burn bridges
Use time wisely	
Listen & share information	
Follow-up: Always write a thank-you note	

## Visiting Your Elected Officials

### Plan Your Meeting :

- **Create a detailed plan.** Decide who is going to be present at the meeting. For example: just yourself; or, you and a few other constituents; or, you and representatives from a particular organization. Also, decide who, apart from your legislator might be present at the meeting, like a staff person.
- **Schedule an appointment.** It is much easier for elected officials to arrange a meeting if they know who you are, what you wish to discuss, and what your relationship is to the area or interests represented by your legislator. And, scheduling an appointment will help gain full and undivided attention. Simply call the office and ask to schedule a meeting. Make certain you identify yourself, note the purpose of the meeting, and whether other individuals, other than yourself, will be in attendance. Even if you can't meet directly with you elected official, you can schedule an appointment to meet with their staff person.
- **Confirm the appointment.** You should call to confirm your meeting. Sometimes legislators and other elected officials have important, last minute meetings that can't be avoided. Calling to confirm the meeting will save you a trip to the office and will give you the opportunity to reschedule for another day.
- **Know your issue.** It is helpful to research relevant information including any recent studies or news articles relating to your issue prior to meeting. You should develop a comprehensive understanding about the pros and cons of your issue and know the current status of legislation. In addition, it is important to know your lawmakers past voting record and what their priorities are.
- **Be prepared.** If you are planning a group meeting, it is a good idea to have a meeting with the group before you meet with the elected official. It can be effective for your group to select a spokesperson and maybe one or two others who can act as supporting roles – providing statistics or other anecdotes. Practice your advocacy in front of the group, or have someone play "devils advocate" and ask tough questions of the spokespersons.
- **Select a scribe.** It is a good idea for the group to select a scribe, someone who will take notes throughout the meeting. It is especially important to write down any position statements, questions or special requests made by the legislator. The scribe can also be assigned to write the follow-up response and thank-you note.
- **Outline your concerns.** You represent a unified front, and should present your positions as such. Make certain that you spend some time before the meeting outlining your 2 or 3 major talking points and supporting statements. Keep in mind you will have limited time, so your arguments need to be clear and concise. Outlining your concerns will help you – and the group – stay focused.

### Execute the Meeting:

- **Provide accurate information.** Make certain you begin the meeting by introducing yourself and anyone else participating in the meeting. Also, clarify

again why you requested the meeting and what you are asking your legislator to do.

- **Briefly make your pitch.** Remember to keep it short and simple. It is important to restate the purpose of the meeting, outline the major concerns and present supporting documentation. Finally, thank your legislator for taking time to meet with you. It is important that your lawmaker understand how the proposed legislation will personally impact you.
- **Be punctual.** It's easy to get lost in government buildings. Make certain that you know where the meeting place is and that you arrive a few minutes early. If you have some extra time, use it to relax and review your talking points.
- **Be patient and flexible.** Due to crowded schedules, it is not uncommon for a legislator to be late, or to have a meeting interrupted. If interruptions do occur, be flexible. When the opportunity presents itself, continue your meeting with a member of the staff.
- **Be political.** Your legislator wants to represent the best interests of their district. Keep your pitch short and to the point. Begin your meeting by informing your legislator what action you want done. Wherever possible demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the legislator's constituency. Ask questions to clarify any position statements made by the legislator and be prepared to answer questions from your lawmaker.
- **Leave Your Contact Info.** Be sure to leave your personal contact information with your lawmaker or their staff. At a minimum, you should include the names, addresses, and phone numbers of each person attending the meeting. Leaving your contact info allows your legislators to follow-up with you personally.
- **Do Follow-Up.** Finally, be responsive, follow up the meeting with a thank you letter that outlines the different points covered during the meeting, reiterating any commitments he or she has made to you and send along any additional information and materials requested.

### Writing Your Legislator

A letter to your lawmaker is next most effective and the most common form of communication. Writing letters help to create a paper trail. Most letters are noted and answered by legislators or their staff. The amount of mail received by a legislator ("mail count") sometimes helps to determine his or her approach to an issue. Here are some tips to get you started.

- **Be clear and concise.** The purpose for writing the letter should be stated in the first paragraph. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly.
- **Be specific. Ask for action.** Tell your legislator exactly what action you want them to take and give the reasons for your position. Do not hesitate to cite your own experiences or how the proposed legislation will directly impact you. If you are an expert in a particular field (i.e. a doctor, lawyer, patient, etc.) mentioning that can help to build credibility.
- **Include supplemental information.** Enclosed with the letter you can include related editorials, news articles, research studies, letters to the editor, or other supplemental materials that support your position or generally relate to the issue you are concerned with.

- **One issue at a time.** Address only one issue in each letter, and, if possible, keep the letter to one page. Also, thank your legislator in advance for the consideration s/he will give to the issue.

### Addressing Correspondence

To a County Supervisor	To a City Council Representative
The Honorable FULL NAME COUNTY NAME Board of Supervisors STREET ADDRESS CITY, STATE ZIP	The Honorable FULL NAME CITY NAME City Council STREET ADDRESS CITY, STATE ZIP
Dear Supervisor LAST NAME:	Dear Councilman/Councilwoman LAST NAME:

### Phoning Your Legislator

Contacting your legislator by phone is an effective way to show your support or opposition on a particular issue. Phone calling is most effective when you can mobilize "phone-ins" - when lots people call their legislator's office(s) regarding a specific issue within a few days or even a few hours of one another.

- **Be aware of timing.** The most effective time to place a call to your lawmaker is close to a vote or legislative hearing. It is not required that you write a letter or have made an attempt to contact your lawmaker prior to a phone call, but it is helpful. If you have written or visited with your legislator in the past remind them or their staff of this previous contact when you call.
- **Write a script.** Before you make the call, think thoroughly about the reason for your call. Your phone call will be short, so you really need to have an action for your legislator to make and one or two concise statements prepared to support the action. The goal is to make absolutely clear what action you want your legislator to take.
- **Identify yourself,** make sure they understand that you are a concerned voter and tell the aide you would like to leave a brief message, for example: "Please tell Supervisor/Councilman (Name) that I support/oppose (name legislation or ordinance).
- **Ask to speak to the right person.** Generally, a staff member, not the lawmaker, will take your telephone calls. It is important that you ask to speak with the aide who handles your issue. Make clear your position and the action you think your member should take. Feel free to ask questions and share information about your issue, however be concise and considerate.

